

I claim:

1. A pull-behind mower for cutting ground vegetation, said mower comprising:

a frame adapted to be coupled to a vehicle and rollingly supported on the ground;

a motor rigidly coupled to the frame;

a mowing deck coupled to the frame for pivotal movement relative to the frame on first and second intersecting pivot axes; and

a drive train for drivingly coupling the motor to the deck so that the motor powers the deck,

said drive train including a first rotatable drive shaft, a second rotatable drive shaft, and

a U-joint coupled between the first and second drive shafts for rotation therewith, said U-joint being centered proximate the intersection of the first and second pivot axes.

2. A mower according to claim 1,

said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on the first pivot axis between a retracted position and an extended position,

said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on the second pivot axis between an engaged position and a disengaged position,

said first and second pivot axes being at least substantially perpendicular to one another.

3. A mower according to claim 2,

said deck pivoting through a first pivot angle of more than about 20° when pivoted between the extended and retracted positions,

said deck pivoting through a second pivot angle of more than about 30° when pivoted between the engaged and disengaged position.

4. A mower according to claim 2,

said first pivot axis being generally upright.

5. A mower according to claim 4,

said first drive shaft being configured for rotation on the first pivot axis.

6. A mower according to claim 1; and
a support arm comprising a frame-side section coupled to the frame and a deck-side
section coupled to the deck,
said support arm including a hinge joint for permitting pivoting of the deck-side section
relative to the hinge-side section.

7. A mower according to claim 6,
said hinge joint permitting pivoting of the deck relative to the frame on the second pivot
axis.

8. A mower according to claim 7,
said frame-side section being rotatably coupled to the frame,
said frame-side section being rotatable relative to the frame on the first pivot axes.

9. A mower according to claim 8,
said first and second pivot axes being substantially perpendicular to one another.

10. A mower according to claim 9,
said first pivot axis being generally upright.

11. A pull-behind mower for cutting ground vegetation, said mower configured to be pulled behind a vehicle and powered independently of the vehicle, said mower comprising:

5 a frame presenting a fore end and an aft end;
a hitch coupled to the fore end and configured to releasably couple the frame to the vehicle in a manner that permits pivoting of the frame relative to the vehicle;
a pair of laterally spaced wheels coupled to the aft end and adapted to rollingly support the frame on the ground;
10 a mowing deck operable to cut vegetation when positioned proximate the ground;
a support arm comprising a frame-side section rotatably coupled to the frame and a deck-side section rigidly coupled to the deck, said frame-side and deck-side sections being hingedly intercoupled; and
a motor rigidly coupled to the frame and drivingly connected to the deck, so as to power
15 the deck independently of the vehicle.

12. A mower according to claim 11; and
a drive train for transferring power from the motor to the deck,
said drive train including a first rotatable drive shaft, a second rotatable drive shaft, and
20 a U-joint coupled between the first and second drive shafts.

13. A mower according to claim 12,
said support arm permitting pivoting of the deck relative to the frame on first and second distinct and intersecting pivot axes,
25 said U-joint being centered proximate the intersection of the first and second pivot axes.

14. A mower according to claim 11,
said frame-side section being rotatable relative to the frame on a first pivot axis,
said frame-side and deck-side sections being hingedly intercoupled on a second pivot
30 axes,
said first and second pivot axes being substantially perpendicular to one another.

15. A mower according to claim 14,
said first and second pivot axes intersecting one another.

5 16. A mower according to claim 15,
said first pivot axis being generally upright.

17. A pull-behind mower for cutting ground vegetation around an upright obstruction, said mower comprising:

a frame adapted to be coupled to a vehicle and rollingly supported on the ground;
a mowing deck coupled to the frame and operable to cut vegetation when the deck is in
5 an engaged position proximate the ground, said deck presenting an outer
circumferential edge; and
a tree guard shiftably coupled to the deck and projecting outwardly from the edge.

18. A mower according to claim 17,
10 said guard being rotatable relative to the deck.

19. A mower according to claim 17,
said guard being formed of a synthetic resin material.

20. A mower according to claim 17,
15 said guard including an outer ring that surrounds the edge,
said ring being rotatable relative to the deck.

21. A mower according to claim 17; and
20 a skirt rigidly coupled to and extending generally downwardly from the guard.

22. A mower according to claim 17,
said deck being pivotable relative to the frame on first and second distinct and
intersecting pivot axes.

23. A mower according to claim 22; and
25 a drive shaft including a U-joint,
said U-joint being at least substantially centered on the intersection of the pivot axes.

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